



Testimony to the Government Administration and Elections Committee

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Chairwoman Senator Flexer, Chairman Representative Fox, Vice-chairs, Senator Haskell, Representative Thomas, Ranking members Senator Sampson, Representative Mastrofrancesco and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Cheri Quickmire. I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, non-profit citizens' lobby that has worked to improve the way Connecticut's government operates since 1971. We have 1.5 million members nationwide and more than 15,000 members and activists in Connecticut. Common Cause in Connecticut has a long history of working to increase transparency in government and advocating for the removal of the corrosive influence of special interest money in government and politics and election reform.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify before the GAE committee on these important bills. We support the following proposals:

S.B. No. 184 (Raised) An Act Extending Through November 8, 2022, Several Changes Regarding Election Administration as a Result of Covid-19 and Concerning Eligibility to Vote by Absentee Ballot.

H.B. No. 5262 (Raised) An Act Revising Certain Absentee Voting Eligibility Statutes.

While we are optimistic about the pandemic we are not unrealistic about it coming to a close soon. Our robust outreach and education has transformed in these socially-distant COVID-19 times and I will note that in conversations, commuters in particular are supportive (we met many people at train platforms along the metro north line), students (are universally supportive because of their unpredictable schedules and difficulties with transportation to polling places), low-income individuals (extremely supportive especially in rural areas with limited transportation and urban areas with confusing and changing polling places) and seniors have been universally supportive because of fear of contracting COVID-19.

650,000 Connecticut voters cast their ballots by absentee in the 2020 general election meaning that they chose the time and manner in which they voted. Many voted early and many in fact indicate they would be interested in voting early but in person. Many used the ballot boxes that were installed in each town, in some city/towns had more than one with many located at city/town halls. These measures enjoy broad support from Connecticut voters across the political spectrum– 79% of voters in favor of early voting and 73% of voters in favor of absentee ballot voting. It is time for Connecticut to catch up with the rest of the nation.

It is time Connecticut caught up with most of the rest of the nation and did more to address the challenges of everyday life for voters. Work, childcare, caregiving for ill or elderly, school, sports practice, commuting and community activities are all things that we want to support while helping people make a plan to vote.

Listen to your constituents and quite possibly, listen to your parents who appreciate that the state is caring about their health enough to make the adjustments needed in these times.

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